



Small Engines and Recreational Vehicles

By Rachel Mix

With the luck of one summer day, Dakota High School and Chippewa Valley High School students are now able to take on the task of repairing motorcycles every day.

Chippewa Valley Schools' department of career and technical education (CTE) recently developed a partnership with The Motorcycle Safety Foundation and Schoolcraft College. This new partnership provides a win-win situation for everyone involved. Students in the Small Engines and Recreational Vehicles program are able to apply their technical skills by working on motorcycles that are used for driver training, according to instructor Rex Phelps.

Last summer, Phelps stopped by one of Schoolcraft's road courses and saw some motorcycles in need of maintenance. He proceeded to investigate who was responsible for the task of maintaining these bikes and discovered that only one man was doing all the repairs himself. Phelps then proposed the idea that his Small Engines and Recreational Vehicles program located at Dakota High School could provide some repairs and maintenance on the bikes. His students gain real work-based learning experience and the motorcycle maintenance burden is lightened for Schoolcraft College in the process.

It took from August until December for the liability issues and contract to be worked out, but the students finally received their first batch of motorcycles just before Christmas. The class receives twenty bikes at a time

from Schoolcraft, along with a list of everything that needs to be repaired, according to Phelps. Once the students finish working on the twenty bikes, they simply call and have them picked up with another twenty in need of maintenance delivered.

In the Small Engines and Recreational Vehicles program, students have the option to work on the motorcycles or perform repairs on other items. Aside from the motorcycles, students work on jet-skis, snowmobiles, dirt bikes, go-karts, and lawn and garden equipment. Students also have the opportunity to bring in appropriate items in need of some maintenance. Phelps also receives calls and requests from the community to do repairs.

The main goal of performing these repairs is not to make a profit, but rather to provide the relevant, hands-on application of

newly learned skills. "We try to cover our cost though," Phelps explained. Taking this class aids students in obtaining jobs and certifications. Most dealerships now require that mechanics have certification from postsecondary training colleges like the Motorcycle Mechanics Institute (MMI). Chippewa Valley Schools has an articulation agreement with MMI, according to Phelps. This will allow them to test out of classes, saving time and money in the certification process.

In today's world of work, there exists a shortage of mechanics resulting in jobs waiting for competent, skilled individuals to fill them. Additionally, these skills are in demand wherever small engines are to be found so students could find a job almost anywhere, according to Phelps. Some students that have completed the Small Engines and Recreational

Vehicles program have obtained employment at repair shops. Quite a few staff members from Weingartz Lawn and Garden Supply are former students of this program that began employment during high school as part of an internship experience, according to Phelps. Others attain jobs at motorcycle dealerships and rental centers. There have been a few students that completed this program, went into the Air Force, and are now working on fighter jets, according to Phelps. The skills developed in this area are very similar and provide a transferable foundation to other related areas like aviation or automotive.

When hiring mechanics, dealerships look for professional and personal management skills in addition to technical and mechanical abilities, according to Phelps. Professionalism is a premium skill set that is even more important to many employers than the mechanical skills. Dealerships look for students that are reliable, honest, and can perform tasks neatly. Students in the Small Engines and Recreational Vehicles program are given a solid foundation with emphasis on all of these skills, Phelps stressed, but it is particularly these personal management skills that get students hired and valued in the workplace.

The Small Engines and Recreational Vehicles program taught by Rex Phelps provides students with an opportunity to develop their mechanical skills in a "free and easy atmosphere." Everyone is expected to get along well with others and work together like a family.



Gina Tignanelli is busy at work in Adobe Illustrator CS3 using an electronic pen tablet to create vector artwork visual images in Dr. Ron LaCross's Graphics Design and Imaging Intermediate Class.

Graphic design makes imagination a reality

By Kelly Azar

Imagine being able to design a web-site, make an advertisement, retouch a bad photograph, or create the graphics on a television show; at Chippewa Valley High School those dreams can come to life. The Graphic Design program, taught by Dr. Ron LaCross, a graphics veteran who used to work as a graphic artist for Gerber Products Co., and "Mrs. Kelly" Shroeder, a graphics "junkie" who often takes projects home, assists Dr. LaCross in teaching a series of computer-based courses using industry standard software.

Students participating in this program are not only interested in graphics, but also devoted to their class work and looking for internships. Most are influenced by relatives and have expressed an interest in "going to college for graphics," according to students from both LaCross' class and Mrs. Kelly's class. One of these is Riana Ura, a Chippewa junior and an intermediate student of Shroeder, whose brother owns a graphic printing business.

In order to obtain an internship, available to Chippewa Valley High School (CVHS) and Dakota High School, students must stockpile their creativity in a portfolio, according to both Shroeder and LaCross. In a typical graphic student's portfolio, the in-class assignments are displayed with pride, but the badge of honor and devotion are

the portfolio projects that the students have created on their own time. Some examples of the in-class projects in both teachers' classes include photo touch-ups, additions to photos or newsletters, calendars, posters, and fliers.

Gina Tignanelli, a CVHS junior and an intermediate student of LaCross, has a more privileged portfolio, as she was able to use a double monitored computer and an electronic pen tablet. LaCross and Shroeder both note her as a talented design student, as does Graphics Introductory student, Alyssa Boike.

For the aspiring graphic artists in Chippewa's Career Technical Educational (CTE) graphics program, there is the added benefit of an articulation agreement with Macomb Community College, where Mrs. Shroeder goes for classes to "update her graphics training." Under the articulation agreement, advanced graphic arts students are able to earn up to twelve college credits based in large part on a portfolio review. Shroeder notes that a number of colleges will give credit for Chippewa's Advanced Graphic Design classes offered in two-hour blocks.

Chippewa Valley High School students and Dakota High School students that attend CVHS graphic design classes are also able to get hands-on work in the field by working in actual graphic design businesses. Internships are currently available to those in the advanced graphic class, according to Dr. LaCross, the CVHS internship coordinator. However businesses are sometimes hesitant to provide internships to students younger than 18, as there are many "nip points," or places to cut themselves, and the businesses don't want to worry about the liability, he adds.

In order to enhance the course in the coming years Dr. LaCross is working at the state level on an advisory committee for the Michigan Department of Education in creating the new state curriculum for the CTE Graphics Design and Imaging Program.

Dr. LaCross and Mrs. Kelly both note that Chippewa Valley has the most current design software programs. This technology assisted one of Mrs. Kelly's former students, Derek Bennion, to win the North American International Auto Show Poster Competition of 2006-2007 and a \$1,000 prize.

The Chippewa Valley Graphics Design program helps to prepare students for entry into the graphics industry, and to continue their education at postsecondary institutions like ITT-Tech, Macomb Community College or the College for Creative Studies. A final note about the program is that it is an applied academics class stressing the relevant application of grammar, and mathematics, along with expanding the students' creativity and technological skills.



Student Alysia Paperi, and Weingartz Lawn and Garden Supply employee takes a small break from working on an engine in the Small Engines and Recreational Vehicles program located at Dakota High School.

Early Childhood Education Engages Students

By Jessica Sebring

At first glance, Dakota Preschool is the same as any other. There's an elaborate wooden play place inside and a big, colorful playground outdoors. Paper is wound into jungle vines overhead, with leaves and animals (each representing one of the children) hanging from it. Colorful posters coat the walls. The environment is visibly positive and thoughtfully designed for children.

What sets the preschool at Dakota High School apart from others is that it is largely student-run. As a result of the high number of students enrolled in the program, the preschool student to instructor ratio is almost 1:1.

Chippewa Valley High School and Dakota High School juniors and seniors enrolled in the Early Childhood Education program teach lessons focused on math; science; language arts; music; arts and crafts; large muscle activity; storytelling; and finger-play, which is a recital of a poem, accompanied by hand movements. They write detailed lesson plans for a large portion of their grade, and must prepare any props or activities to accompany their chosen lessons.

High school students alternate weeklong sessions of preschool, or "lab" study, with traditional classroom study focused on early childhood education theory. Mrs. Terry Osborne, the program director and a Chippewa Valley

Schools teacher for 21 years, compared it to college level courses.

"Articulation is an agreement we have with colleges and universities for students to gain college credit for work they do in our program, like advance placement," Osborne explained.

"Students can earn three to nine credits in the field, depending on the college," Osborne added. Schools that offer articulation to Early Childhood Education students include Ferris State University, Baker College, and Macomb Community College.

Study at Dakota Preschool is not the only experience-driven program in Early Childhood Education offered by Chippewa Valley Schools. Students can enroll as Teacher Cadets, who serve as teacher's assistants at district elementary schools.

Their work is much more than making copies and doing busy teacher's chores.

"It's independent. If you want to teach the class that day, you can teach class that day," remarked Teddy Eastman, a senior at Dakota and a Teacher Cadet. He actively advertises the program to fellow students and has plans to attend Western Michigan University to pursue a degree in elementary education.

"Ninety-eight percent of our students go on to college to pursue careers in education," Osborne said. Those students have a tremendous advantage over college freshmen with no previous hands-on experience in

education.

Erin Goeth, a freshman at Oakland University who was in both the preschool and Teacher Cadet parts of the Early Childhood Education program, looks back on the program as one of the most valuable components of her high school career. "The program did a lot. It gave me experience with working with different kinds of kids. I learned how to be patient and that every child learns differently. It taught me how to make lesson plans and to expect the unexpected," she said.

The program is expanding this summer to include a summer preschool, "Camp Dakota," which will run in four 2-week sessions. It will offer an internship — employment by the district as teacher aides — to the two most outstanding students

currently studying at the preschool. Many students are also able to get babysitting and tutoring jobs through the classes.

Student opinion of the Early Childhood Education classes is overwhelmingly positive. "They're silly, and they're really good role models. They can teach and be silly but not irresponsible," senior Ashli Yokubison, enrolled as a preschool and Teacher Cadet student, said of the instructors.

"There are people who take this class because they think it's easy. It's not; you have to be enthusiastic, and that's hard for some people," Yokubison concluded.

"This is the best way to get into early childhood education, with hands-on experience," Eastman said.



Devon Dwinell and Kyle enjoy a typical day at Dakota Preschool.

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